

These parts of Mr. Mathews' work fully maintain the standard of their predecessors. We note with regret that while carefully designating type species for his new genera he still neglects to cite type specimens for his new species or subspecies.—W. S.

**Official Check-List of the Birds of Australia.**<sup>1</sup>—A Committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union has been at work on a Check List of the birds of Australia for the past ten years. It is natural therefore that the result of their long deliberations which is at last before us should have been looked forward to with considerable interest. However it may appeal to Australian bird students, it must certainly be disappointing to progressive ornithologists in other parts of the world.

The Committee carries the principal of priority for genera, species and subspecies, no further back than the 'works' of John Gould 'entitled, "The Birds of Australia."' Gould's names however are superseded (a) "where they were preoccupied in some other branch of zoology, (b) where there had been a clear mis-identification of extra-limital and other forms, (c) where in the light of later knowledge genera had been rejected or new genera created, and (d) manifest errors." For admitted genera, species and subspecies described since the dates of the respective issues of Gould's works, and prior to the dates of the British Museum Catalogue of Birds, the names of the latter work are adopted subject to the above exceptions, while for admitted genera, etc., described later, the name used by the author has been "as far as possible accepted." Along with this we have a statement that a binomial nomenclature is used throughout, and that "all modifications of species ranging to and comprehending subspecies are brought into classification and named, but geographical races are not so, unless such modifications present some material distinguishable differences."

These principles we think constitute the most remarkable 'Code of Nomenclature' that has been framed in recent times.

The Committee would have accomplished its purpose and have freed itself from much adverse criticism if it had adopted the suggestion of Sir E. Ray Lankester, which is quoted on p. 13, and simply presented an 'authoritative list of names' without attempting to cite any rules or explanations.

As it is, the members seem to have failed utterly in comprehending the problem before them. They were surely aware of the fact that in ornithology as in every branch of zoology and botany we are confronted today

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<sup>1</sup> Official Check-List of the Birds of Australia by Check-List Committee, Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. Adopted at Launceston, 19th November, 1912. With Report. Melbourne: Walker, May & Co., Printers, Mackillop Street. 1913. Supplement to "The Emu," Vol. XII, January, 1913. Svo, pp. 1-116. Price to Non-Members, 5 shillings. Address Hon. Secretary R. A. O. U., Zool. Gardens, Melbourne.

by a host of names for almost every species and genus, due largely to the carelessness and lack of opportunity of our predecessors. If we are provincial enough to shut ourselves off from the rest of the world and adopt a set of names that suits our fancy, well and good, but we cannot expect others to adopt our list, and if they follow our principle we shall have as many sets of names as there are countries and there will be no universal language of science.

There is no way to abolish the host of names already coined, and the clamor to preserve 'time-honored names' is ridiculous. Not only do we all differ as to what names are 'time-honored' but the loudest claimants for such action do not hesitate to subdivide old genera and so wipe out one half of each 'time-honored name,' as effectually as if done by the principle of priority. Therefore the International Zoological Congress established its Commission on Nomenclature which has prepared a code and which renders opinions upon questions that give rise to different personal interpretations. The only way to secure uniformity in nomenclature is to follow absolutely *both the Code and the Opinions* of the Commission. Any individual or committee that sets up a new point of departure for nomenclature or his own personal opinion in opposition to that of the Commission hinders by so much the realization of that end.

In the case of the present 'Check List' we fear that the progress of ornithology in Australia has been to some extent hindered although the progressive bird students of the country fortunately possess in Mr. Gregory M. Mathews' 'Reference List' an admirable check-list of Australian birds on advanced lines, following rigidly the International 'Code' and 'Opinions' except in the failure of the author to recognize Brisson's genera, a stand that we have always sincerely regretted. It is unfortunate that the Australian Committee could not have seen its way clear to avail itself of Mr. Mathews' laborious researches in nomenclature and so establish today as the official Australian nomenclature, what will inevitably sooner or later supersede that which is here presented.

In matters of the recognition of subspecies and subdivision of genera we cannot expect uniformity except by the majority vote of a committee, as the personal equation has here to be reckoned with and no code can settle the questions involved. Therefore we must expect differences in the number of forms included in the present list and that of Mr. Mathews. In its acceptance and rejection of forms however the Committee, apparently fails to comprehend the true nature of a subspecies. For instance it recognizes two subspecies of *Synorius* as occurring in Tasmania, whereas, if there are two recognizable forms it is the different environmental conditions of Tasmania and Australia which have differentiated the two forms. If both occur together then we have either two distinct species or a mere case of individual variation which requires no recognition in nomenclature. Just how 'subspecies' and 'geographic races' are differentiated, too, is not clear. Mr. Mathews regards the form just mentioned as a very questionable 'geographic race' yet the committee establishes it as a 'subspecies' with a binomial name!

The rules governing family and subfamily names are not given but we fail to see how the name *Peltohyatinae* can be used when *Peltohyas* has been rejected in favor of *Eudromias* for the only species of the group, *E. australis*, which is the monotypic type of *Peltohyas*!

We regret exceedingly that we cannot endorse this Check-List for general use. Aside from all questions of nomenclature, it would serve a valuable purpose as a conservative list of Australian species and subspecies; but here it fails, in-as-much as the lack of synonymy makes it difficult or impossible to ascertain with which forms the many recently described races have been united.— W. S.

**Riley on Birds of the Mount Robson Region.**<sup>1</sup> — During July, August and September, Messrs. J. H. Riley and Ned Hollister of the U. S. National Museum joined the expedition of the Alpine Club of Canada to the Mt. Robson region of the Canadian Rockies, for the purpose of making a general survey of the fauna and flora. The general account of the expedition has been published in volume IV of the Club's Journal while this special number contains the scientific reports.

Mr. Hollister contributes an account of the mammals, and a list of the reptiles and batrachians, Mr. Riley reports on the birds and Mr. Paul C. Standley on the plants. The route included Jasper House, Henry House, then through the Yellow head Pass and up the Moose River to Moose Pass and Moose Pass branch of the Smoky River, with a stay on the Fraser River east of Moose Lake on the return.

Seventy-eight species of birds are listed including a Song and Fox Sparrow which Mr. Riley has described as new in a previous paper. Bohemian Waxwings were evidently breeding on the west fork of the Moose River, as a specimen obtained July 14 contained an egg nearly ready to be deposited. These birds were much paler than winter examples and similar individuals undoubtedly, as Mr. Riley suggests, formed the basis for Reichenow's subspecies *Bombycilla garrula pallidiceps* from Shesly River, B. C.

Mr. Riley found *Zonotrichia gambeli* and *Z. leucophrys* apparently nesting in the same spot while *Junco hyemalis hyemalis* and *J. oregonus shufeldti* were nesting together at Henry House, Yellowhead Pass and at the foot of Moose Pass, with no sign of intergradation. On the strength of this evidence he ranks them as distinct species. *Penthestes hudsonicus columbianus* is recognized as a distinct form and *Lagopus leucurus peninsularis* is considered as no more distinct from true *leucurus* than is *L. l. altiptens*, the two being respectively the northern and southern extremes of the White-tailed Ptarmigan. Mr. Riley contends with apparent justice that both or neither should be recognized.

<sup>1</sup> Birds Collected or Observed on the Expedition of the Alpine Club of Canada to Jasper Park, Yellowhead Pass, and Mount Robson Region. By J. H. Riley. Canadian Alpine Journal, Special Number. Alpine Club of Canada (Treas. S. H. Mitchell, Sidney, Vancouver Island, B. C.) 8vo, pp. 1-97 (Birds 47-75). Price \$1.00.